3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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fore the noise subsided, the drummers would strike up the next war song and the dancing would be resumed, shortly to be interrupted again. Dancing warriors might occasionally interrupt the dance to narrate exploits of their own. Finally, the leader spoke of the necessity of the war party and its aim, and ended by appealing to his followers to display their accustomed courage while on the raid, that their people might be proud of them and not consider them cowards.

Shortly afterwards, the leader silently and without ceremony left the dance. The dance continued for a time, but occasionally a warrior and a maiden quietly slipped away into the dark for a few minutes together before parting, for the Comanches enjoined no continence, although they must not be seen leaving together. There might be several parties going out under as many leaders. In such a case, instead of having so many War Dances going at once, each party might end its dance in a short time and make way for another leader and his party. The leader had previously designated a rendezvous outside the village, and after the dance, the warriors returned to their lodges to get their horses and equipment; then silently they stole off to the gathering place. The raid was under way.

Under no circumstances could the War Dance or departure occur in daytime. That was bad medicine. On one occasion a group of warriors held their dance and left during the day. Not a single member of the party returned. The case was never forgotten nor repeated.[8]

Each man who gathered at the rendezvous had provided himself with arms, lasso, food, clothing, a robe if the weather was disagreeable, and horses. The food consisted of dried meat, in sheets or pounded fine, and mesquite meal. Both were very strengthening, packed well, and were convenient to carry. This food was taken only as emergency rations, for they were expected to subsist on the flesh of animals killed along the route.

When the raiders planned a quick thrust at the enemy and a hurried get-away, they left their women, children, and lodges at the main camp and traveled as unencumbered as possible. The leader and men with sacred shields might each take along a woman to help with their equipment, but they seldom exercised the privilege. It was not uncommon, however, for some women to accompany them for the

[8] Informant: Yellowfish.

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(ca. 1870)

[ca. 1870]

and he may mutilate or beat her to the full extent of his capricious will. 593
In certain cases he is even permitted to take her life, without acknowledging responsibility to any one for his conduct. As among civilized people, 684
there are "common women of the tribe," outcasts from respectable Comanche society, just as there are outcasts from Christian society among the civilized people of Europe and America. These "Women" have no rights which Comanche ladies and gentlemen are bound to respect. The condition of slavery, which falls to the lot of all women of the tribe, is intensified in the case of the fallen. The others are slaves of one master only; these have many masters and many mistresses. According to our code of morals, the Comanche cyprian has been guilty of no crime, which all the females of the tribe who have arrived at the age of puberty have not committed. She has been unfaithful to the marriage contract, without consulting the wishes of her husband, and without bringing him any gain, and terribly is she made to suffer for it. She is beaten, with many stripes, [304]
and not infrequently suffers mutilation by having her nose cut off. This fixes the brand of her disgrace; and henceforth she becomes the slave of the tribe. There may always be seen a few of these miserable creatures about a Comanche camp. The women are especially cruel toward them, and take much apparent delight in beating them. And yet these same immaculate maidens and matrons have not once, but many times been made to endure the embrace of any purchaser at the behest of their husbands and fathers.

Custom has established laws among the Comanches as among more civil- 671
ized people. It is a law among them that a wife may be mutilated, or even 593
killed, for the crime of infidelity, and yet husband is not averse to select- 684
ing any number of lovers for her and compelling her to accept them, pro- 837
vided his worldly fortune is advanced thereby.

There is no prudish seclusion of Comanche maidens. They mingle with 834
great freedom among the people of their tribe. They may have their 584
beaux as well as their white sisters, and the gallants need have no fears of an over-prudent papa, or an irate "big brother." If there is a rough place in the course of the stream of affection, it is not the youth but the maiden that must suffer the castigation. A pony will suffice to satisfy the utmost requirements of the social law.

When a young Comanche gentleman takes it into his head to go a-wooing, 584
he decks himself with a profusion of paint, a gorgeous head-piece made 301
of feathers; dons his finest suit, puts on all the decorations of distinction 291
which he is entitled to wear, which usually consist of a necklace of wild- 237
cats' claws, coyotes' tails, the canine teeth of wolves, elks' teeth, and not